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PROSE RHYTHM IN ENGLISH

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THE suggestions which I venture to put forward in this lecture occurred to me recently while I was reading Saintsbury's *History of English Prose Rhythm*. I realize that I am guilty of temerity in writing upon a subject which lies outside the range of my usual work, and can only excuse myself by saying that I have studied similar phenomena in ancient and mediaeval prose. Some three years ago I published a paper upon the mediaeval *cursus*, which contained a brief introduction to the study of numerous prose.[1] Since, however, I cannot hope that more than a few of my listeners may have seen this, I must begin by repeating a few points.

For the origin of prose rhythm we must go to Cicero. Nature, he tells us, has placed in the ears a register which tells us if a rhythm is good or bad, just as by the same means we are enabled to distinguish notes in music. Men first observed that particular sounds gave pleasure to the ear, then they repeated them for this end. Thus, practice came first and was succeeded by theory. The rhythm of prose is based on the same principle as that of verse. This in ancient prose was the distribution of long and short syllables ; in our own tongue it is the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables. The difference between the rhythms of prose and verse is said to be one of degree. In verse the metre is constant and unbroken, in prose the measures are loose and irregular. In this respect prose is said to resemble lyric poetry, a very suggestive remark.

The theory of ancient writers is, that the whole sentence is pervaded or 'winged' by rhythm, or 'number', but that this number is most noticeable in the cadence, or *clausula*. The sentence is termed period, and its parts are called *commata* and *cola*. There is a cadence at the end of the colon, and to a less extent at the end of the comma, similar to that at the end of the period. At the end of each there is a beat or κρότος, similar to that used in music or poetry. Whenever the speaker paused to draw fresh breath, he punctuated by a *numerus*, or cadence. Thus, as I have said elsewhere, 'the *numeri* coincide with the beats and reveal the secret of

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[1] *The Cursus in Mediaeval and Vulgar Latin*, Oxford, 1910.

ancient punctuation.'[1] So also in the twelfth century A. D. Pope
Gregory VIII speaks of the pause in the middle of a sentence *post
punctum vel post metrum*.[2]   In this connexion it is interesting to notice
that the person who is said to have invented *numeri*, i. e. the use
of rhythmical cadences in prose, Thrasymachus of Chalcedon, is
also said to have first pointed out the nature of the κῶλον and the period.
We still use the terms comma and colon, but in a new sense, i. e. to
mark the grammatical construction. For this the ancients did not
care, their punctuation was founded on delivery.   Their ears were far
sharper than ours, and their speech was more musical.   Thus, we
hear of an occasion when a Roman orator brought down the house by
a sentence ending with a double trochee, while a Greek audience
would beat time with a monotonous speaker, anticipating the inevitable
finale.

Cicero gives examples of perfect prose, in which it is impossible to
vary the order without destroying the rhythm. He also attempted
to give rules for composition, distinguishing between good and bad
endings.   Here he was not so successful. His examples agree but
imperfectly with his own practice, and he has no coherent theory
to propose.   The one statement which is really fruitful, and which
tends to emerge more and more clearly in subsequent writers, is that
the chief ingredient in prose rhythm is the cretic.   He laboured under
the same difficulty as we do to-day.   We know that, when we write,
we choose a word or a collocation, because our ears tell us that it
is right.   Also, when we read a piece of perfect English, we are con-
scious of a bewitching rhythm, but we cannot tell wherein the charm
resides.   It is necessary to insist on this point, since many writers
assume that the last word on Latin rhythm was said by Cicero, and
turn deaf ears to all the results of modern analysis.   They say, ' I will
go as far as Cicero went, and not one step further.   The modern
method is not that of Cicero.'   The answer is, ' Quite true, but
Cicero failed.'

The secret of ancient prose was discovered recently, and that
in a curious manner.   The inquiry was started in 1880 by Noel
Valois in a tract upon the art of letter writing in France in the Middle
Ages.   He drew attention to certain texts in which the use of three
methods of ending a clause or sentence is inculcated.   These are
termed *cursus planus*, *cursus tardus*, *cursus velox*.   Fresh contributions
were made by a number of scholars.   It was shown that the three
forms of the *cursus* were not peculiar to letter writing, but were

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[1] *Cursus*, p. 5.   [2] *Fontes Prosae Numerosae*, p. 35.

employed in a vast body of literature. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the *cursus* was adopted by the Roman *curia,* and rules for its use were laid down by various Popes. The *planus* consists of five syllables with accents on the first and fourth, e. g. *vóces testántur* ; the *tardus* of six syllables, also with accents on the first and fourth, e. g. *méa curátio* ; and the *velox* of seven syllables with accents on the first and sixth, e. g. *gáudia perveníre.* Modern writers would attribute to the last a minor accent on the fourth syllable. The English equivalents for these forms would be, e. g. *sérvants depárted, pérfect felícity, glórious undertáking.* The next step was to show that these accentual clausulae were already used in writers of the fourth and fifth centuries, and were preceded by a system in which quantity, not stress, played the chief part. Thus *vóces testántur* is preceded by *vōcĕ tēstātur, méa curátio* by *nōstră cūrātiō,* and *gáudia pèrveníre* by *gāudiŭm pērvĕnīrĕ.* This metrical system was shown to go back to classical Latin prose, and to be present in the writings of Cicero himself. Meanwhile patient workers had been tabulating the endings of Cicero's sentences, and arrived independently at the result that his favourite forms were exactly those which correspond to the three forms of the *cursus.* These may be reduced to a single formula, viz. a cretic base with a trochaic cadence of varying length.[1] This, however, was no new invention of Latin writers : like everything else it came from Greece. The prose of Demosthenes, like that of Cicero, is ' winged ' with numbers, and Roman writers quote as examples of his severe rhythm μηδὲ τοξεύῃ and τοῖς θεοῖς εὔχομαι, which are examples of the *planus* and *tardus.* The Asiatic writers chiefly affected the ending with a double trochee, which corresponds to the mediaeval *velox.* Before Demosthenes we find the same favourite forms in the prose of Isocrates, which already exhibits the same rhythms as those which pervade the prose of Cicero. We are thus dealing with a development which extended over a period of nearly 2,000 years. I do not, of course, imply that the favourite rhythms were at first so frequent as they became subsequently. There was originally a rich variety of cadences. In course of time the three special forms became increasingly common, until finally, like Aaron's rod, they swallow up their competitors. The final result was that prose composition became stereotyped.

I have tried to state the case as simply as possible, since this is not the occasion for a minute discussion of the ancient clausula. I must add that various licences are allowed. The commonest of these is the

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[1] The last syllable is always *anceps* as in verse.

substitution of two short syllables for one long, e. g. *ēssĕ vĭdēărĕ* in Form i : so also *ēssĕ vĭdĕāmĭnī* in Form ii.[1]   These varieties survive in the *cursus*.   Thus for *esse videatur* the accentual equivalent is *mála nocuísset*, and for *ésse videámini* we find e. g. *míssae celebrátio.* Another frequent licence is the prolongation of the trochaic cadence by another syllable (Form iv), e. g. *spíritum pèrtiméscere*, which in the *cursus* becomes *cúriae véstrae scríbere.*   There is also a very interesting variation, viz. the substitution for special purposes of a spondee for the trochee in the cadence, which did not pass into the *cursus*.   Of this I will speak shortly.

The remarks of the ancients on prose rhythm have naturally led various inquirers to ask if similar phenomena are to be found in our own tongue.   Saintsbury tells us that Bishop Hurd wrote on the rhythm of Addison, and John Mason, a Nonconformist minister, in 1749 published an essay on the 'Power and Harmony of Prosaic Numbers'.   These writers tried to apply to English prose the rules laid down by Cicero and Quintilian.   The task was one in which success was impossible.   In the first place, there is the essential difference that Latin rhythm depends on quantity and English rhythm on stress. Secondly, there is the fact that Latin is a polysyllabic language, while English is largely monosyllabic.   Lastly, it has been shown that Cicero and Quintilian did not grasp the secret principles by which they were themselves influenced.   Their disciples, therefore, were following blind guides.

In spite of all the obscurities which surround the subject, no one has doubted that there are principles at work, if only we could grasp them.   Thus various friends have suggested to me that regular rhythms are to be found in Gibbon and Macaulay.   I had myself some two years ago amused myself by tabulating forms of the *cursus* to be found in the speeches of that very rhythmical orator, Mr. Lloyd George.

The question was put on a fresh basis by a paper written by Mr. John Shelly, which appeared last year in the *Church Quarterly Review*.   In this he shows that the writers of the Prayer Book adopted in the Collects and in other parts of the liturgy rhythms identical with those which they found in their copy, viz. the Missal and Breviary. This throws light upon a remark which I have heard more than once, that it seems impossible now for any one to write a good Collect. Mr. Shelly goes on to show that these rhythms passed into current use and have persisted to the present time.   Thus he quotes from a sermon of Newman, in which twelve clauses in one sentence end

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[1] These varieties are known as i[2] and ii[2].   In both of them the second long syllable is replaced by two shorts.   So also other resolutions, e. g. iii[2].

with some form of the *cursus*. He thinks that Newman's style must have been influenced by his prolonged study of the Fathers.

Saintsbury refers to Mr. Shelly's paper, which was published after his own book was in type. He says, however, 'I doubt whether Latin cadences are patient of exact adjustment to English. I also doubt the possibility of effectually introducing, with us, the so-called *cursus*.' The method which he follows himself is the traditional one, that founded on Cicero and Quintilian. He used quantitative symbols throughout, marking stressed syllables long and unstressed syllables short. There are various points in his system which may be criticized, but I do not propose to deal with these now, and would only refer to some objections which I have raised in the *Oxford Magazine* (April 24, 1913). The most disconcerting feature in his book is the lack of positive results. He professes himself unable to give any rules by which fine effects are to be attained, 'any prose-forms corresponding to the recognized forms of verse.' So also he remarks, 'I disdain, detest, abominate, and in every other English and classical form renounce the attempt to show how a prose-harmonist should develop his harmony.' Here he is a little inconsistent, since elsewhere he relents in favour of a particular combination.[1] His final judgement, however, is that 'as the essence of verse-metre is its identity, at least in equivalence and recurrence, so the essence of prose rhythm lies in variety and divergence'. When commenting on the finale of Browne's *Urn Burial*, he notes that in his scansion 'no two identical feet ever follow each other, not so much as on a single occasion'. The reader cannot but suspect that there must be some flaw in a method which produces such small results.

While I venture to criticize Saintsbury's method, I am full of admiration for his fine taste, which is shown not only by felicitous criticisms expressed in striking phrases, but also his selection of passages from the greatest authors, which, in his judgement, are perfect examples of prose rhythm. He has formed a collection of what he calls 'diploma pieces'. This is a contribution of the greatest value, since on this subject he speaks with authority. He has the advantage of a sensitive and highly trained ear, and if he says that the rhythm is flawless, we have no alternative save to accept his judgement. Saintsbury, therefore, has performed the great service of focussing the question. If his diploma pieces do not reveal the nature of English prose rhythm, it is idle to search elsewhere.

I cannot but think that Saintsbury pushes the principle of variety

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[1] Dochmiac, third paeon, and amphibrach.

too far. I do not for one moment dispute that it is one of the ingredients in prose rhythm. The essence, however, of rhythm both in prose and verse is regularity of beat. As Dionysius says, prose is εὔρυθμος, since διαπεποίκιλταί τισιν ῥυθμοῖς, but not ἔρρυθμος, since οὐχὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς οὐδὲ κατὰ τὸ αὐτό. This, he remarks, is true of all prose which exhibits τὸ ποιητικὸν καὶ μελικόν, e.g. that of Demosthenes.

That in English rhythmical prose is closely allied to verse is shown by the extreme ease with which we drop into blank verse. Saintsbury remarks that Chaucer, whom he calls the Father of English prose, although in his prose works he eschews rhyme, cannot avoid metre. Thus the tale of Melibee 'opens with a batch of almost exactly cut blank verse lines'.

> A young man called Melibeus, mighty and wise begat
> Upon his wife, that callèd was Prudence
> A daughter which that callèd was Sophie.

Saintsbury gives several instances where a skilful writer avoids blank verse by various devices. Thus Malory writes

> And so Sir Lancelot and the damsel departed,

where *maid* for *damsel* would produce blank verse.

So de Quincey says

> Among the lovely households of the roe-deer,

where the addition of *roe* breaks the measure.

The most striking *tour de force* is the dream of Amyas Leigh in Kingsley's *Westward Ho*, which Saintsbury arranges as a piece of continuous blank verse, pointing out that 'from time to time words are inserted which break the regularity of the rhythm and remind the reader that after all it is not meant to be metre'. He considers it a successful experiment, but applies to such an experiment a remark of the late Professor Bain on the subject of kissing, that 'the occasion should be adequate and the actuality rare'.

I would now call attention to two statements made by Saintsbury. The first is that in Old English or Anglo-Saxon the rhythm is mainly trochaic. He speaks of a 'continuous trochaic roll which at the énd of línes is práclicálly ómniprésent'.[1] This 'trochaic hum' is said to be due to the character of the language, which, being 'largely monosyllabic and at the same time inflected, necessarily begets trochees ready made in still larger quantities'. The second statement is, that in Middle English the 'trochaic tyranny' was mitigated by the disuse

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[1] Here he employs six consecutive trochees, a good example of this 'roll'.

of inflection and the introduction of a more polysyllabic vocabulary taken from the Romance languages and from Latin. This process begins with Chaucer and is consummated by the writers of the Prayer Book and the Authorized Version who had Latin models before them. The rhythm of Middle English, we are told, is ' composite ', i.e. partly native and partly Latin.

This is an observation of the highest importance, and suggests a method of attacking the problem, which is, so far as I know, new. It is briefly this. If we take passages which Saintsbury considers perfect—and here his judgement seems to me infallible—and mark those rhythms which are Latin in character, the probability is that the residue, and especially those effects which are wholly alien to the Latin system, are native. We are dealing with two quantities, one of which is known. This being so, we ought to be able to discover something about the unknown quantity.

Before I go further, it is necessary to say something on the subject of word division, or *caesura*. In the examples which I have given previously, I have for the sake of clearness made the clausula begin with a word. This, however, is not necessary. Thus *vultusque moverunt, iactabit audacia, nefarium concupisti* are just as good as *voce testatur, nostra curatio, gaudium pervenire.* So also in English the rhythm of *obéy thy commándments* and *keép thy commándments* is the same. The caesura within the clausula requires special attention, since here a difference between English and Latin becomes visible.

In order to make the point clear, we must go back to Latin. Here in Form i there are five possible varieties, which have been distinguished thus : [1]

I α bālnĕātōrī.
I β nōn ŏpōrtērĕ.
I γ vōcĕ tēstātŭr.
I δ cāllĭdē fēcĭt.
I ϵ rēstĭtūtī sūnt.

The favourite caesura in Form i, in classical Latin, is γ, and in the *cursus* this becomes normal. This is also true of Form ii, but in Form iii the δ type is usual in classical Latin and normal in the *cursus*. The exact equivalents, therefore, in English are e. g. *sérvants depárted, pérfect felícity, glórious ùndertáking.* Since, however, English is chiefly disyllabic and monosyllabic, the *cursus* becomes modified in the process of naturalization. Thus in i the favourite type is $\gamma\delta$, e. g. *dúty and sérvice, hónour and glóry.* This combination, it may be noticed,

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[1] Zielinski, *das Clauselgesetz*, p. 27.

emphasizes the trochaic rhythm which is natural to the language. We find many other varieties, e. g.

βγ   thése our misdóings, praíse and thanksgíving.
βγδ déw of thy bléssing, síght of the heáthen.
γε   mércy upón us.

So also in ii,[1] e. g.

βγ   jóy and felícity.
γδ   Cána of Gálilee.
δεζ   cómeth to júdge the earth.
βγδεζ shíne for thy líght is come.

Also in iii, e. g.

γδ   pásseth all ùnderstánding.
γδζ   sérvice is pérfect freédom.

It may be noticed that other varieties of the *cursus* are represented in English. Thus Form iv, e. g. *spīrĭtŭm pērtĭmēscĕrĕ* (=*cúriae véstrae scríbere*) corresponds to *boúntiful lìberálity, heávenly bènedíction, plénary àbsolútion*. Also, Cicero's *esse videare* (1^2), which in the *cursus* is succeeded by *mála nocuísset*, is paralleled in English by e. g. *glóry everlásting*. We find modifications of this with more than one caesura, e. g. *glóry of the Fáther, wrítten for our leárning, índustry and lábour*.

The scansion *glóry everlásting* is in accordance with the rules followed in accentual Latin. Here, if a word like *videátur* is preceded by one unaccented syllable, e. g. *míhi*, the first two syllables are not accented. Thus *míhi videátur* is the successor of Cicero's *ēssĕ vĭdēātŭr*. If, however, it is preceded by two unaccented syllables, e. g. *plúrima vìdeántur*, then the first syllable receives a minor accent. Thus *glóry everlásting* corresponds to *míhi videátur* and *glórious, èverlásting* to *plúrima vìdeántur*.

So also we find parallels for other resolutions, e. g. *sílly agitátion*, which corresponds to *ēssĕ vĭdēĭmĭnī*. This is to be contrasted with *fúrious àgitátion*.

I am aware that in chants the usual accentuation is *glóry èverlásting*. This, I take it, is due to the 'trochaic roll', inherent in the language, which has mastered the Latin cadence.

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[1] The exact equivalent with the γ caesura only is rare, except when the last word is of Latin origin, e. g. *óther advérsity, sérvant Victória, etérnal salvátion, pérfect contrítion*. In modern English such words as *salvation* are pronounced as trisyllables, in the Prayer Book they are quadrisyllables. Thus *etérnal salvátion* is equivalent to *aetérna salvátio (tardus)*.

Mr. Shelly points out that out of ninety-five cases in the Collects which do not belong to forms of the *cursus* no less than seventy-one end with an accented syllable, e. g. *ármour of líght, contémpt of thy wórd.* This is wholly alien to Latin. The Latin accent is never on the last syllable of a word, and accented monosyllables were carefully avoided at the end of a sentence. Such an ending was felt to be bizarre, as in Horace's line—

<div align="center">parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus.</div>

Here, therefore, we have a clear case of a native rhythm as distinct from the *cursus*.

In several examples where an accented monosyllable comes at the end, there is a marked trochaic cadence, e. g. *fórty dáys and fórty níghts, pléase thee bóth in wíll and deéd, thiévish córners óf the streéts.* The most striking instance which I have noticed is in the *Te Deum*, viz.—

We, thérefore, práy thee, hélp thy sérvants, whóm thou hást redeémed wíth thy précious bloód.

We find similar prolongation of the trochaic movement when the last word is a disyllable, e. g. *máke thy chósen peóple jóyful; fíre and brímstone, stórm and témpest.* In Latin this would be very bad; in English our ears tell us that it is good. Here, also, again we have something which is not Latin. The trochaic hum rises above the soft music of the *cursus*.

Saintsbury quotes a passage from Bishop Fisher to illustrate the development of harmonious prose in the time of Henry the Eighth. The sentence begins as follows:[1]

No creature may express how jóyful the sínner is (2), when he knóweth and ùnderstándeth (3) himself to be delivered from the great búrden and heáviness (2).

Here the influence of the *cursus* is clearly visible.

When discussing the *A. V.*, he selects the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah as one of the highest points touched by English Prose:

Arise, shíne, for thy líght is cóme (2) and the glory of the Lord is rísen upón thee (1). For, behold, the darkness shall cóver the eárth (*) and gróss dárkness the peóple (1), but the Lórd shall aríse upón thee (3) and his glóry sháll[2] be seén upón thee (*) and the Gentiles shall cóme to thy líght (*) and kings to the bríghtness of thy rísing (1 2).

[1] In this as in other citations I add the stress-accents where they appear to cast light on the rhythm. Asterisks mean that there is no Latin equivalent.

[2] Saintsbury scans *glŏrў shăll bĕ.* It seems to me that there is a stress on *shall.* If so, we have a succession of trochees. If, however, there is no stress, then the form is the Latin iii².

Here two clausulae, viz. *cóver the eárth* and *cóme to thy líght*, both of which end in a stressed monosyllable, are clearly not Latin in character.

Saintsbury draws attention to the effect produced by the monosyllable *shíne* at the beginning of the sentence. This is made more emphatic by the fact that it is preceded by another stressed syllable, viz. *aríse*. He also points out the fine effect of the adjective in *gróss dárkness*. Here also there is a similar clash of accents. We are now face to face with a fundamental difference between the *cursus* and the native rhythm. The main object in the *cursus* is to secure an interval between stressed and unstressed syllables. In the *planus* and *tardus* there is an interval of two unstressed syllables between the two stresses, and in the *velox* of four, or if we allow the minor accent on the fourth syllable, two also. The same rule prevails in Greek Prose of the Byzantine period. This collision of accents appears to introduce sublimity in English Prose.[1] Further on in this paper I shall give other examples : here I would merely call attention to the effect in the Confession of the conflicting accents in

> *We have erred and strayed from thy wáys, like lóst sheép.*

Here the stressed monosyllables produce the effect of a wail.

No author is treated by Saintsbury with more enthusiasm than Sir Thomas Browne. He gives a long quotation from *Urn Burial*, which he pronounces to be a 'spaced and rested symphony'. It begins with the famous sentence :

Nów sínce thése deád bónes have alreády outlásted (1) the living onés of Methúsaleh (2) and in a yárd únder groúnd (*) and thín wálls of cláy (*) oútwórn áll the stróng and spécious buíldings abóve it (1) and quíetly résted (1) under the drúms and trámplings of threé cónquésts.

Saintsbury very happily compares the opening five monosyllables to 'thuds of earth dropping on the coffin-lid'. The passage is remarkable for the collision of stress accents, viz. *yárd únder, thín wálls, threé cónquésts*. It will be noticed that it contains two disyllables with a stress accent on each syllable, viz. *oútwórn* and *cónquésts*. The clausula *trámplings of threé cónquests* is of special interest since it may be illustrated by parallels in classical Latin.

We find from time to time in Cicero and other authors a striking deviation from the ordinary trochaic cadence, viz. the substitution of a spondee for the trochee. This is most common in Form iii, which thus becomes $- \cup - \mid - - \mid - \smile$, e. g. *includuntur in cārcĕrĕm*

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[1] Cf. For the Lórd is a greát Gód, and a greát Kíng abóve áll góds.

cōndēmnāti, *commōtŭs ēst*, *sūdāt*, *pāllēt*, but is also found in Form ii, e. g. *ēbriīs sĕrvīrĕ*, *lībĕrī sērvi ōdērŭnt*.   This harsh rhythm is reserved for passages in a major key.   I have examined all the occasions in the Philippics where it occurs, and find this true almost without exception.   Zielinski says of such rhythms, 'then comes the hammer stroke'.

Here *trámplings of threé cónquests* appears to be the English equivalent of *ēbriīs sērvīrĕ*.

I would compare Saintsbury's remark upon a sentence of Thomas Hobbes, viz. :

In great difference of persons the greater have often fallen in love with the méaner, but nót cóntráry.[1]

He remarks, 'every time of reading—at least I have found it so for some half-century—the penetrating, but not clangorous dirge-sound will be heard more clearly.'

Meáner but nót cóntráry is an English parallel for *carcerem condemnati.*   Saintsbury's dirge-sound corresponds to Zielinski's hammer stroke.

Browne in this passage varies his rhythms.   Thus a sentence which Saintsbury singles out for special praise is purely Latin, viz.:

According to the ordaíner of órder (1) and mýstical màthemátics (3) of the cíty of heáven (1).

The mixed rhythm of English prose was now fixed, and its general character appears to be the same in passages quoted from various authors.   The style of Addison is interesting, since a contemporary, Bishop Hurd, tried to find in it observance of the rules laid down by Cicero and Quintilian.   In this connexion a criticism of Hurd is quoted.   He says :

' Oŭr sīght ĭs thĕ mōst cŏmplēte ănd mōst dĕlīghtfŭl sēnse wĕ hāve.' Here, except the second foot, which is an anapaest, the rest of them are all of one kind, i. e. iambics.   Read now with Mr. Addison— ' Oŭr sīght ĭs thĕ mōst pērfĕct ănd mōst dĕlīghtfŭl ŏf āll oŭr sēnsĕs '— and you see how the rhythm is varied by the intermixture of other feet, besides that short redundant syllable -*ses* gives to the close a slight and negligent air, which has a better effect, in this place, than the proper iambic foot.

[1] Saintsbury scans *cōntrărў*, but the old pronunciation seems to have been *contrāry*, corresponding to the Latin *contrārius*.   In modern English the accent has shifted; with the result that the long syllable has been shortened.

Here *delíghtful of áll our sénses* is Form iii, while *delíghtful sénse we háve* is an example of the trochaic roll to which attention has been called. *Our síght is the móst compléte* is Form ii, while *our síght is the móst pérfect*, which Hurd prefers, is an example of S 2, the spondaic rhythm which I have just discussed.

The first sentence in Saintsbury's extract from Gibbon is:

The protection of the Rháetian fróntier (1) and the persecution of the Cátholic Chúrch (*) detained Constántius in Ítaly (2²) above eighteen months after the depárture of Júlian (2).

The clausulae here are Latin except *Cátholic Chúrch*.

Saintsbury's remarks upon *depárture of Júlian* are suggestive. After stating that 'Gibbon's everlasting irony is assisted by rhythm', he says that 'for actual cadences some have noted a recession or rescission towards trochaic ending as in *ắftĕr thĕ dĕpārtŭre ŏf Jūliăn*'. He prefers to arrange it ' ắftĕr | thĕ dĕpārtŭre | ŏf Jūliăn, thus giving that juxtaposition of paeon (chiefly third) and amphibrach which will be found almost omnipresent in Gibbon and which may be a proximate cause of his peculiar undulation'. This statement is noticeable in view of Saintsbury's insistence upon variety as the chief factor in prose rhythm. I would remark in the first place that *Julian* appears to be a trisyllable, not a disyllable. If so, the clausula is an example of No. 2. If not, then it is No. 1.

Saintsbury's third paeon and amphibrach give us the sequence $\smile\smile - \smile \quad \smile - \smile$, i. e. $\sim \sim \acute{} \sim \sim \acute{} \sim$. Here the first two syllables, according to my view, do not affect the rhythm, and the other five, viz. $\acute{} \sim \sim \acute{} \sim$, are the ordinary formula for the *cursus planus*.

Saintsbury notices that 'the word values are arranged with evident cunning' in the following extract from Coleridge:

The woody Castle Crag between mé and Lodóre (*) is a rich flower-gárden of cólours (1), the brightest yéllows with the deépest crímsons (3²) and the ínfinite shádes of brówn and greén (4) . . . Little woól-packs of whíte bríght vápour (S 3) rest on different súmmits and declívities (2²).

He remarks: 'In *the brightest | yellows | with the deepest | crimsons* (amphibrach, trochee, third paeon, trochee) I almost dare to say we glimpse one of our panthers, a common prose combination corresponding to a verse.' I scan *yéllows with the deépest crímsons* as 3². Cf. the Latin *frŏnde cắpŭt ŏbvŏlūtŭm*.

He calls attention to 'the familiar-unfamiliar word *woolpacks*,

the parts of which might have no sense at all—it is so perfectly expressive, in sound, of what it means'. The rhythm would rather seem to reside in the collision of accents, viz. *whíte bríght vápour*. *Woól-packs of whíte bríght vápour* is the English equivalent for Cicero's *mōtŭs ēst, sŭdāt pāllĕt* (S 3).

De Quincey supplies 'a perfect type in miniature of rhythmed prose', viz.:

And her éyes, if they were éver seén (*), would be neíther sweét nor súbtle (*); no mán could reád their stóry (*): they would be found fílled with périshing dreáms (*), and with wrecks of forgótten delírium (2).

The interest of this short sentence, which Saintsbury terms 'a magazine of the secrets of its kind', is that it contains only one Latin rhythm, viz. *forgótten delírium,* and that in the clausula, where tune is most required. The other effects appear to be indigenous. Here we recognize the prolonged trochaic run in *neíther sweét nor súbtle* and *mán could reád their stóry* and the accented monosyllable at the end of the clauses *éver seén* and *périshing dreáms,* for which Latin has no parallel.

De Quincey can also write in the Latin style, as in the following extract, which Saintsbury calls beautifully rhythmical :

Out of the darkness . . . uprises the héavenly fáce of Fánny (3). One áfter the óther (1) like the antiphónies in the chóral sérvice (3²) rise Fánny and the róse in Júne (2²), then báck agaín the róse in Júne and Fánny (*). Then cóme both togéther (1), as in a chorus, róses and Fánnies (1), Fánnies and róses (1), without end, thick as blóssoms in Páradise (2).

Fanny here is the musical unit, which lends itself admirably to the different combinations. In one case we have the trochaic rhythm of Anglo-Saxon, viz. *báck agaín the róse in Júne and Fánny*: the other clausulae are Latin.

From Landor I would take two passages, the first of which is put by Saintsbury beside de Quincey's gem in the *Mater Suspiriorum* as 'unsurpassed since the renaissance of numerous prose' :

There is a gloom in deép lóve as in deép wáter (S 2): there is a silence in it which suspénds the foót (*), and the fólded árms (*) and the dejécted heád (*) are the ímages it reflécts (*)[1]. Nó voíce shákes its súrface (*): the Muses thémsélves approách it (*) with a tárdy and

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[1] Possibly *it* should here be stressed. If so, we have Form ii.

a timid stép (2²), and with a low and tremulous and mélanchóly[1] sóng (∗).

Here the rhythms seem due to indigenous factors, the collision of accents, viz. *deép lóve, deép wáter, nó voíce shákes, Múses thémsélves*, the stressed monosyllable at the end of the clauses, *suspénds the foót, fólded árms, dejécted heád, timid stép, mélanchóly sóng*, and the trochaic run which pervades the passage. The only clauses for which Latin affords any parallel are *lóve as in deép wáter*, and *tárdy and a timid stép.* Of the mediaeval *cursus* there is no trace.

Another passage which Saintsbury terms 'a little more rhetorical' yields different results :

Thére are nó fiélds of ámaranth (4) on thís síde of the gráve (∗), there are no voíces O Rhódope (2) that are nót soón múte (∗), hów-ever túneful (1), thére is nó náme (∗), with whatever emphasis of pássionate lóve repeáted (3), of which the écho is not faínt at lást (2²).

Carlyle's prose is said by Saintsbury to be essentially Wagnerian, containing 'rhythm fragments of extreme beauty, united by a master harmony which pervades the jangle'. He quotes a description of Spanish soldiers marching to Chile :

Eách sóldier láy at níght (∗) wrápped in his póncho (1), with his knápsack for píllow (1) under the cánopy of heáven (1²), lúllabied by hárd trávail (∗) and súnk soón enough ínto steády nòse-mélody (2), ínto the foólishest roúgh cólt dánce of unimáginable Dreáms (∗).

Here the collision of stressed monosyllables is noticeable, viz. *eách sóldier, hárd trávail*, and *roúgh cólt dánce*, also the stressed monosyllable *dreams* at the end of the sentence. The rhythm *steády nòse-mélody* deserves especial attention. This is exactly similar to the metrical Form ii used in classical Latin, e. g. *nŏstră cŭrātĭō*, i. e. a cretic followed by a trochee. In the *cursus*, e. g. *méa curátio* or *bóna remédia*, the third syllable is shortened by the tug of the accent, which shortens unstressed syllables, as in modern Greek or English. Consequently, while Terentianus Maurus assigns to the cretic a *beata sedes* in the clausula just before the end, Pope Gregory VIII (A. D. 1187) says, '*finales dic-tiones debet quasi pes dactilus antecurrere.*' Now in *steády nòse-melody* the dactyl has become a cretic again. This, I take it, is due to the fact that the monosyllable *nose* resists the tug of the accents in *steády* and *melody*. If, therefore, a stressed monosyllable occupies this place in English, the base is a cretic rather than a dactyl. It is for this

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[1] Saintsbury scans *mēlănchŏlў* according to the present pronunciation.

reason that in the previous extract from Landor I treat *thére are nó fiélds of ámaranth* as an example of Form iv.   Carlyle continues:

Canópus and the Soúthern Cróss (2^2) glítter dówn and áll snóres steádily begírt by gránite déserts (∗), looked on by the constellátions in that mánner (1^1).

Saintsbury notices that rhythm is here the determining factor, and says that ' Cănōpŭs | ănd thĕ Soūthĕrn | Crōss are chosen from the Host of Heaven to look down on the incongruous snorers because of the desirable combination of amphibrach, third paean, and mono-syllable'.   I take the clause to be 2^2 ending with a stressed mono-syllable, and would draw attention to the trochaic movement in *begírt by gránite déserts.*

Macaulay's rhythm is very classical, e. g.

And there the ladies whose lips more persuásive than thóse of Fóx himsélf (4) had carried the Westmínster eléction (1) against pálace and treásury (2) shóne roúnd Geórgiána (? 3), Dúchess of Dévon-shire (2).

Geórgiána here is a beautiful double-trochee, and I am rather sur-prised that Macaulay did not complete the rhythm by writing *shóne aroùnd,* in which case the clausula would have been wholly Latin. Wherever we get a double trochee, it is easy to construct perfect specimens of the *velox,* e. g. *beaútiful Píccadílly, Látin and Ánglo-Sáxon.*

Saintsbury notices Macaulay's fondness for trochaic endings, and says that ' the staccato style undoubtedly invites them and so in very modern work gives a throw-back to the most ancient'.   This is a very suggestive remark.   The cadences to which he refers are simply those of classical and mediaeval prose.

Newman is pronounced to have been one of the greatest masters of quietly exquisite prose.   This statement is interesting in view of the facts pointed out by Mr. Shelly, to which I have already alluded. The prose of Ruskin hardly falls within the scope of this discussion, since frequently it transcends the limits of prose and becomes poetry. Saintsbury notices in one extract successions of eight, ten, and thirteen blank verses, while in another place Ruskin actually drops into rhyme.

Pater is said to have been the most remarkable writer belonging to the last division of the nineteenth century.   While Ruskin may be charged with absence of quiet, quietude is the chief feature of Pater. ' On this apex of English Prose, if on no other, there is rest.'   Pater's

composition as a whole inclines to the non-Latin type, as may be seen from the sentence:

Thróugh his strange veíl of síght (2) thíngs reách him só (*): in no órdinary níght or dáy (2²), but as in faínt líght of eclípse (*), or in sóme briéf ínterval (*) of fálling raín at dáybreak (*), or thróugh deép wáter (*).

Here we notice the strings of stressed monosyllables and the resultant clash of accents: also the predominant trochaic roll. Of Latin influence there is little to find.

I now venture to put together some reflections which present themselves to the mind after this discussion.

Rhythm in poetry depends upon the recurrence of longs and shorts, or stressed and unstressed syllables, in a regular order. In prose the effect is produced by the same means, but the metre is not complete. We have to deal with two principles, viz. that of recurrence and that of variety. Saintsbury appears to attribute too much importance to variety, which, if not modified by some sort of system, however loose, results in chaos.

The rhythm natural to a language depends upon its vocabulary. Here there is an obvious difference between Latin and English. Latin is essentially a polysyllabic language, while most words in English are disyllables and monosyllables. This difference is fundamental and must always be borne in mind. On the other hand there is a striking point of similarity, namely the trochaic cadence which is a characteristic of both languages. This was modified in Latin by the cretic base which precedes the trochaic movement, and the use of harsher measures in the middle of the clauses. The trochaic rhythm is chiefly found in the *clausula*, and does not generally extend further than over a few syllables. In English the trochaic movement pervades the whole sentence and frequently produces the effect of blank verse.

The three forms of the *cursus* came into English from Latin and from the Romance languages. When Latin words were naturalized, they brought with them the cadences in which the genius of the Latin tongue found best expression. The introduction of such words was largely due to their occurrence in the liturgy of the Church, and to their consequent adoption by the authors of the Prayer Book and the translators of the Bible. These cadences, however, were modified when they became anglicized, owing to the lack of polysyllables. The English *cursus* presses monosyllables into its service with the result that, although the scheme of accentuation is the same, the caesuras are more numerous and more varied. No attempt was

made to make the *cursus* universal. This would have been to force the language into a bed of Procrustes. The native elements, viz. the trochaic roll and the stressed monosyllable, were combined with the exotic. The rhythm of English is mixed, like the nation itself, and the mixture constitutes its charm. In this respect English differs from mediaeval prose and frequently presents analogies to the freer system of Cicero and Demosthenes. We have won our way back from monotony and servitude to variety and liberty.

It would appear that the sublimest effects in English prose are produced by the native not the exotic rhythm. The two chief means employed appear to be the collision of accents which is alien to the binary movement [1] of mediaeval prose and the prolongation of the trochaic roll with its tendency towards blank verse. The object of the *cursus* was to procure a smooth ending, or, as its name implies, a 'run'. It produces harmony, not grandeur, and imparts to prose an element of tune.

[1] *Cursus*, p. 22.